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## Dining Hall Makes Refreshing Changes

By Evan Karl '14, Contributing Writer

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Walking into Val for the first time since my arrival on campus, I immediately questioned whether or not I was in the right building. Was I dreaming? Surely this couldn't be the Valentine Dining Hall of yesteryear: where was the tacky carpet? The sweaty clump of sports teams who just got out of practice? Perhaps somebody had spiked the coffee with some sort of psycho-hallucinogenic drug concoction?

Well, in case you haven't figured it out already, the changes made to Val this summer are no hallucination (and the coffee, well, that's just what "Dean's Beans" taste like). After months of renovation, the new and improved Val proves to be infinitely more efficient — but just how was this amazing feat achieved? Let's break it down step by step:

**Opening New Doors:** In the old Val, trying to squeeze between the salad bar and the old location of the coffee station on the east wall proved hard — if not altogether impossible — during peak traffic hours. By conveniently moving the coffee station outside with the rest of the other beverages (what a concept!), east-west traffic on the south side of the salad bar proves drastically more manageable. Furthermore, the fine folks at Dining Services decided to add an additional entrance just west of where the coffee used to be on the south wall: not only does this significantly decrease the amount of traffic in the serving area at one time (by funneling those uninterested in salad or ice cream straight for the beverages), but it makes getting upstairs quick and easy.

**Do You Want Ketchup On That?:** Remember the days of waiting in line for condiments, biding your time scanning the front page of The New York Times only to find out 15 minutes later that the last of the ketchup was squelched out of the machine by some self-righteous freshman with a hot dog? Well put down your paper and fret no more (seriously — the veins on your forehead are starting to creep me out). In the new Val, condiments can be easily be found just outside of the serving area across from the beverages, alleviating traffic on the west end and quickening the process of getting in and out. I can't promise there'll always be ketchup, but at least the process of finding out there isn't any won't be as much of an investment.

**Grab a Cup:** By moving the entire beverage station to the west end of the serving area, the folks at Dining Services have not only saved us from the displeasure of trying to balance our drinks while loading our burgers with tomatoes and relish, but they've made the art of making homemade root beer floats that much easier. Now, it's easy to grab some ice cream before running over to the soda fountain dispensers to load up on Coke or root beer.

Can't find anything you like? Take a stroll around the corner and you'll have all the choices you want (and even more of the same!). Not only has the beverage station's new location been helpful in moving the lines right along, but having them strategically placed as the last item to grab will most likely result in fewer spills.

All in all, I would be hard-pressed to find someone who doesn't view the new Val favorably in comparison with its vastly obsolete counterpart. Lines are shorter, people move faster and even that funky smell upon entering from the south entrance seems to have vacated the premises. With a new paint job and some brightly colored floor designs, the new Val is quickly becoming another hot spot on campus — so grab a book, fill up on some "Beans" and don't be afraid to tell your friend you've been sitting at that table since 4:30 p.m. The new Val is clean, mean and — for once in its existence — a well-oiled machine.